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ABSTRACT

Recognizing that children today will spend almost half of their lives as grandparents, this paper examines grandparenthood and the grandparent-grandchild relationship. The paper focuses on the grandparent role, discussing styles and dimensions of grandparenting. A number of variables are discussed directly affecting grandparenting: (1) age of grandparents and grandchildren; (2) gender of grandparents and grandchildren; (3) maternal versus paternal grandparents; (4) accessibility and availability of grandparents; (5) grandparental role perceptions; and (6) ethnic and cultural variations. The paper also considers the impact of divorce on grandparents, including step-grandparenthood and legal issues and visitation rights. Finally, suggestions for future research on grandparenthood are presented. Contains 46 references. (KB)

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Running head: GRANDPARENTING

# Grandparenting in the '90s

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## Grandparenting in the '90s

Approximately three-fourths of the elderly in the nation have living grandchildren (Cunningham and Brookbank, 1988). Furthermore, children today can be expected to spend almost one-half of their lives as grandparents (Barranti, 1985). The increase in the number of grandparents in the past decade and the expected future increase, along with the increase in life expectancy, have highlighted the need to further explore the nature and importance of the role of grandparents. The primary goal of this paper is to examine grandparenthood and the grandparent-grandchild relationship as well as contemporary research topics related to grandparenting.

This paper will begin by examining the grandparental role. A number of studies have been designed to identify and classify styles and dimensions of grandparenting. Next, a number of variables that directly affect grandparenting will be explored. These include the age of grandparents and grandchildren, gender role of grandparents and grandchildren, maternal versus paternal grandparents, accessibility and availability of grandparents, grandparental role perceptions, and ethnic and cultural variations. Following this, the impact of divorce on grandparents will be examined, including step-grandparenthood and legal issues

and visitation rights. Finally, suggestions for future research on the topic of grandparenthood will be discussed.

Roles of Grandparents

Neugarten and Weinstein (1964) developed one of the earliest typologies of grandparenthood. In their study, they conducted interviews with 140 grandparents and identified five different types of grandparents based on their interactions with their grandchildren.

The formal grandparent, according to Neugarten and Weinstein (1964), is very interested in their grandchildren, often indulging them and offering them special treats. While they may occasionally babysit for their grandchildren, they leave the parenting role to the parents. In general, the formal grandparent follows the proper and prescribed role for grandparents. In their study, Neugarten and Weinstein classified 33 percent of the grandfathers and 31 percent of the grandmothers as the formal type.

The fun-seeking grandparent is the second type identified by Neugarten and Weinstein (1964). The relationship between grandparent and grandchild is characterized by informal play and the grandparent displays little or no authority. Such grandparents desire a mutually satisfying emotional relationship and view grandparenting as a leisurely diversion. Neugarten and Weinstein classified

24 percent of the grandfathers and 29 percent of the grandmothers in their study as the fun-seeking type.

The third type of grandparent is the parent surrogate. These grandparents take on the parenting responsibilities and serve as the primary caregiver for the grandchild. Oftentimes grandparents take on this role when the parent works and the grandparent assumes caretaking responsibility for their grandchild. Neugarten and Weinstein (1964) identified no grandfathers in their study as this type, but 14 percent of grandmothers were classified as such.

The reservoir of family wisdom is the fourth type of grandparent. This type of grandparent is believed to have special skills and knowledge and the younger generations are in a subordinate position. Lines of authority between grandparents and young parents are distinct. Only 6 percent of grandfathers and 1 percent of grandmothers in the study were classified as this type.

The final type of grandparent is the distant figure. These grandparents tend to be loving but remote and often have little contact with their grandchildren. Twenty-nine percent of the grandfathers and 19 percent of the grandmothers were classified as this type in the study.

In a similar study, Kornhaber and Woodward (1981) sampled 300 grandchildren under 18 years old and identified five roles for grandparents. The first role was that of

historian, wherein the grandparent provides the grandchildren with a sense of the history of the family. The second role, mentor, is one in which the grandparent passes down knowledge and wisdom to the grandchildren. The third role for grandparents involves serving as a role model for the grandchildren, modeling the grandparental role. In the fourth role, wizard, grandparents entertain the grandchildren by telling stories and through imagination. Finally, the fifth role is that of nurturer/great parent wherein the grandparent serves as a crucial component of the grandchild's social support system.

Four grandparenting role-types were identified by Wood and Robertson (1976). They utilized a two-dimensional categorization to examine the meaning of grandparenting based on the social and personal attitudes and expectations held by the grandparent in regard to their role.

The apportioned type of grandparent is equally concerned about the social and personal aspects of grandparenting. They want to do what is morally right in regard to their grandchildren but also tend to indulge or spoil them. Typically, these grandparents were the most involved with their grandchildren. Twenty-nine percent of the grandparents in the study were categorized as this type.

The symbolic grandparent, according to Wood and Robertson (1976) is more concerned with the social aspects

of grandparenting, focusing on the social meaning of their role as opposed to the interpersonal dimension. Twenty-six percent of the grandmothers in their study were classified as symbolic grandparents.

The third role identified by Wood and Robertson (1976) was that of individualized grandparent. The personal aspects of grandparenting were the focus here, as grandparents saw their relationships with their grandchildren as helping them to curb loneliness and keeping them young. Eleven percent of the grandparents were classified as such.

Finally, the remote grandparent places little emphasis on either the social or the personal aspects of grandparenting. These grandparents tend to be relatively uninvolved with their grandchildren. Eleven percent of the grandparents in Wood and Robertson's (1976) study were typed as remote grandparents.

Dimensions of grandparenting were the focus of Kivnick's 1982 study in which she interviewed 286 grandparents. She identified five dimensions of grandparenthood. The first dimension, centrality, refers to the degree to which grandparenting is central to the life and person of the grandparent. The second dimension, valued elder, addresses the grandparent as resource person, as well as the grandparent's view of the value he or she holds in the

eyes of the grandchildren. The third dimension was that of immortality through clan and focuses on the continuity of the family. Reinvolvement with personal past was the fourth dimension which views grandparenting as a review of one's own life experiences. Finally, the fifth dimension, spoil, examines the degree to which grandparents indulge their grandchildren. While all of the grandparents in Kivnick's study referred to each of the five dimensions, each did emphasize one dimension over the others. The emphasized dimension seemed contingent upon the stage of the life cycle being discussed, as well as experiences and relationships with past generations of grandparents.

Kahana and Kahana (1971) used a different approach to the study of grandparenthood. They described a variety of levels of analysis important to the study of grandparenthood. One level involved examining grandparenthood as a social role, including both ascribed status and role performance. The opposite end of the spectrum explores grandparenthood as an emotional state and considers it to be part of the development of the individual. Grandparenting as a transaction between grandparents and grandchildren is a third level wherein reciprocity and mutual influences are considered. Intergenerational relationships, patterns of help and maintenance of the family are examined in the fourth level

which views grandparenthood as part of a group process within the family. Finally, grandparenthood is viewed as a symbol, a reflection of aging and usefulness to society.

While these studies used different methodologies, from questionnaires to interviewing to more quantitative measures, and different sampling procedures, some similarities can be found. The fourth type of grandparent in the Neugarten and Weinstein (1964) study, the "reservoir of family wisdom", is conceptually similar to Kornhaber and Woodward's (1981) "mentor". Kivnick's (1982) "valued elder" also bears some similarity to Kahana and Kahana's (1971) "symbol" and Wood and Robertson's (1976) "symbolic" type.

In general, these studies examining roles and styles of grandparents view the grandparental role as static and unchanging. A unidimensional approach is often taken, wherein grandparents are forced into only one style of grandparenting. More recent researchers have adopted a more fluid view of grandparenting. Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) interviewed 546 grandparents and identified three distinct styles of grandparenting. First, the remote grandparent sees their grandchild infrequently, maintaining more of a ritualistic, symbolic relationship with them. Next, the companionate grandparent is easygoing and adopts a friendly style of interaction with their grandchild. Finally, the involved grandparent takes an active role in

raising their grandchild, which includes substantial authority and oftentimes demanding expectations. Cherlin and Furstenberg found that the grandparenting style often changes during the lifespan of the grandparent. Furthermore, grandparents tend to interact differently with different grandchildren. Their study points to the importance of examining other variables that play a crucial role in the study of grandparenting. We will explore a number of these variables later in this paper.

The role of the grandparent in the United States is contextual, primarily defined by grandparents and their extended families. Typically, grandparents are expected to encourage their adult children to be independent and to refrain from interfering in the rearing of their grandchildren (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986). However, it appears that the actual roles that grandparents play in the lives of their grandchildren may differ greatly.

Variables Affecting Grandparenting

A number of variables have been examined in the research literature on grandparenting. These variables considered are perceived to have a direct impact on the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren. A number of different constructs have been used to evaluate the quality of that relationship including emotional closeness, satisfaction and bonding.

We turn now to those personal and situational variables which have been identified in the research literature on grandparenting that influence the interaction patterns of grandparents and their grandchildren. These include the age of grandparents and grandchildren, gender role of grandparents and grandchildren, maternal versus paternal grandparents, accessibility and availability of grandparents, grandparental role perceptions, and ethnic and cultural variations.

Age of grandchildren. A number of researchers have focused on the age of grandchildren and how it affects the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. In their 1970 study, Kahana and Kahana found that younger children (under age 10) felt closer to their grandparents than did older children. Similarly, grandparents indicated that they liked their younger grandchildren more than they liked their older grandchildren. Younger grandchildren wanted to be indulged by their grandparents and engage in fun activities. Older grandchildren sometimes felt alienated from their grandparents. Kahana and Kahana (1971) found that the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren varies with the developmental cognitive changes that are occurring in the grandchild. It follows that as children grow older, their ability to participate actively in interpersonal relationships increases, thus

changing the quality of the grandparent/grandchild relationship.

Robertson (1977), who studied a sample of grandchildren aged 18 to 24, found that older children often feel a sense of responsibility toward their grandparents. In addition, they indicated that they viewed their grandparents more like friends and felt that they had a great deal of influence in their lives. This stands in sharp contrast to the results of Kahana and Kahana's (1970) study wherein older grandchildren often felt alienated from their grandparents. Other researchers have found that adolescents often turn to grandparents as special family resources (Gilford and Black, 1972; Hagestad, 1978).

Age of grandparents. A number of researchers have found that a grandparent's age may have a significant influence on the relationship between grandparent and grandchild. In the study by Neugarten and Weinstein (1964), the age of the grandparent was found to be a significant correlate of type of grandparenting style. Younger grandparents (less than 65) were more likely to fit the fun-seeking type, while older grandparents (65 and older) were more likely to use the formal style.

In a study which sampled 106 grandfathers, Baranowski (1987) found that younger grandfathers tended to have more contact with their grandchildren than did older

grandfathers. The age and gender of the grandchild did not appear to affect the frequency of contact or the type of interaction. Similarly, Johnson (1983) studied 58 grandmothers and found that older grandmothers had significantly less contact with their grandchildren than did younger grandmothers.

In their 1976 study, Wood and Robertson found an inverse relationship between the interaction of grandparents and their grandchildren and the age of the grandparents. With age, grandparents tend to have lower mobility and engage in fewer activities with their grandchildren. Younger grandparents, on the other hand, tend to be more active and involved with their grandchildren.

Gender of Grandparents. A number of studies have explored the role that the gender of grandparents plays in the grandparent-grandchild relationship. In general, these studies have found that grandmothers are more likely to have closer relationships with their grandchildren than are grandfathers (Atchley, 1988; Hagestad, 1978; Russell, 1986).

In their 1987 study, Tinsley and Parke observed grandparents during free play with their young grandchildren. They found that grandfathers were less likely than grandmothers to demonstrate caregiving behaviors with the infants or to laugh, smile or kiss the baby. Grandfathers of preschoolers tended to play rough-and-tumble

games with their grandchildren, while grandmothers were more likely to read books and play inside with traditional toys.

Grandparental role also appears to be a function of gender. In the Neugareten and Weinstein (1964) study, grandmothers consistently used the "parent-surrogate" style, while grandfathers were more likely to function as the "reservoir of family wisdom".

Gender of grandchildren. Troll (1971) sampled over 200 grandparents and their grandchildren and found that granddaughters tend to be more concerned with their grandparents than are grandsons. In general, granddaughters talk to and visit with their grandparents more than do grandsons. In addition, they tend to think about their grandparents and worry about them more often. The author speculates that this tendency may reflect the traditional involvement of females in family affairs.

Kivett's (1985) study found some contrary evidence and reported that granddaughters are not more prominent in their relationships with their grandparents than are grandsons. Also, O'Bryant (1987) reported that grandsons provide more types of support and more frequent means of support than do granddaughters.

Differences in topics of conversation were found by Hagestad (1982-83). In his study, grandfathers and grandsons were more likely to discuss work, education,

money and social issues, while grandmothers and granddaughters focused on interpersonal relations, health and appearance, and daily living.

Maternal and paternal grandparents. Kahana and Kahana (1971) found that maternal grandmothers and paternal grandfathers demonstrate more closeness and warmth toward their grandchildren. Intergenerational research by Hagestad and Speicher (1981) found closer relationships between paternal grandfathers and grandsons and between maternal grandmothers and granddaughters. Both studies seem to suggest that this is due, at least in part, to the similarities seen between their grandchildren and their own children and the father-son, mother-daughter link.

Eisenberg (1988) found that while maternal grandmothers and grandfathers see their grandchildren equally as often, grandmothers interact with their grandchildren more during these visits than do grandfathers. Similarly, Matthews and Sprey (1984) reported that maternal grandmothers are usually the closest grandparent to grandchildren. Their findings were supported by a number of other researchers who also found that grandchildren tend to feel closer to and interact more with their maternal grandparents than with their paternal grandparents (Hartshorne & Manaster, 1982; Hoffman, 1979-80).

More recently, there has been evidence to contradict these findings that maternal grandparents have closer and more interactive relationships with their grandchildren. Miller and Bengston (1987), in a longitudinal study of three generations, found no significant difference between the relationships of maternal and paternal grandparents with their grandchildren.

Accessibility and availability of grandparents. A number of researchers have acknowledged the gatekeeping functions that parents serve, mediating the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren. The role that grandparents play in the lives of their grandchildren depends, at least in part, on the extent to which parents allow the grandparents access to their grandchildren.

Robertson (1975) identified dimensions along which this gatekeeping function can be organized. These include the form of contact, location of interaction, types of activities engaged in and the frequency of contact. These dimensions play an important role in determining the nature of the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren.

The availability of grandparents also plays a role in the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren. Harris (1975) reported that approximately fifty percent of grandparents are in almost daily

face-to-face contact with their grandchildren and 75 percent of grandparents see their grandchildren at least two times a month. According to Matthews and Sprey (1985), grandchildren who visited their grandchildren at least three times a year were more likely to describe their relationship as close than were those who visited less often. Kivett (1985) found that grandfathers felt closest to grandchildren with whom they had the most contact. Contrary to this, Wood and Robertson (1978) reported that feelings of closeness prevail even when interaction between grandparents and grandchildren is minimal.

Grandparental role perceptions. According to Neugarten and Weinstein (1964), 42 percent of grandmothers and 23 percent of grandfathers in their study indicated that biological renewal was the primary significance of grandparenthood. These grandparents felt youthful and confident that their lives would continue through their grandchildren. Thomas (1989) reported that more grandfathers put an emphasis on generational immortality than did grandmothers.

Crawford (1981) found that a number of grandparents felt emotionally fulfilled and enjoyed a sense of "vicarious achievement" through interactions with their grandchildren (p. 283). Other grandparents identified their

role as one of providing financial assistance or information.

Bengston and Kuypers (1971) found that grandparents tend to see their role as being more important, in terms of ties to their grandchildren, than do their grandchildren. Updegraf (1968) reported that the majority of grandparents exhibit a great deal of pride and pleasure in regard to their interactions with their grandchildren.

Contrary to these findings, Kahana and Kahana (1971) argued that the grandparental role is primarily symbolic and ritualistic and of little importance in the lives of the majority of grandparents.

Ethnicity and culture. Only a handful of studies have addressed the role of ethnicity and culture in grandparent-grandchild relationships. The majority of these studies have focused on African American and Mexican American families, with little attention given to other ethnic groups. We will briefly review these findings here.

Jackson (1986) reported that African American children are more likely to live with their grandparents than are their counterparts. The 1989 report by the Commerce Department's Census Bureau cited that 13 percent of African American children, 5 percent of Hispanic American children, and 3 percent of Caucasian children lived with their grandparents (Bengston & Robertson).

Strong intergenerational relationships were also found in Mexican American families (Markides & Martin, 1990). The majority of grandparents were involved in their grandchildren's daily lives and all emphasized biological continuity.

Few empirical investigations exist which examine ethnic and cultural variations in other ethnic groups. In addition, cross-cultural research in the area of grandparenthood is scarce. Both of these areas remain open for research and further study.

Impact of Divorce and Remarriage on Family Reconstitution

With today's rising divorce rate and the increase in the number of older people, the impact of divorce on the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren has been studied by a number of researchers.

In their 1982 study of 78 grandmothers, Ahrons and Bowman found that, in general, contact between grandmothers and their adult children followed a curvilinear pattern after a divorce. Immediately following the divorce and for approximately one year, there was increased contact; however, after one year, contact returned to levels prior to the divorce. This pattern can also be seen in the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren following a divorce. The authors speculated that this pattern may actually represent a healthy intergenerational

response to divorce with children turning to their parents at the time of crisis for support and then becoming more independent again as the stressor lessens in severity. Along those same lines, the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren often intensifies in closeness and amount of contact following a divorce and then lessens only in contact, not closeness, with increasing time.

In regard to the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren following a divorce, Wilson annd DeShane (1982) found that divorce has typically resulted in fewer interactions and less close relationships between grandparents and their grandchildren.

Contrary to these findings, Gladstone (1988) found that contact between grandparents and grandchildren often remains the same or increases following divorce. He interviewed 80 grandmothers and identified a number of factors that were associated with increased contact. First, geographic proximity allowed for more contact and greater support. Grandmothers who lived within an hour's drive and lived closer to their grandchild following the divorce reported more face-to-face and telephone contact with their grandchildren. Second, increased contact was associated with visitation between grandchildren and the noncustodial parent at the grandparents' home. Grandmothers whose own child retained custody over the grandchild reported more interaction with the

grandchild following the divorce. Third, grandparents who assumed childcare responsibilities for their grandchildren while the parents worked enjoyed increased contact. These grandmothers also reported an increase in the amount of advice provided and time spent teaching family history and traditions since the divorce. Finally, if the child-in-law was no longer in the home of the grandchild, grandparents often felt more comfortable with visiting and increased their contact.

According to Barranti (1985), three factors appear to mediate the impact of divorce on the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. First, one must consider the relationship between them prior to the divorce. A second factor to examine is the degree to which the divorce is resolved either amicably or otherwise. The third and final factor is the amount of tension that exists between the parents and the grandparents.

Johnson (1988) identified three types of reorganization in postdivorce families. Generational reorganization was most often seen with women who were in need of financial help and expected a great deal of support from their families. Initial dependency on the extended family eventually gives way to more independence as these women attempt to break away. Oftentimes, grandparents find themselves assuming a long-term surrogate parenting role

with their grandchildren during this time of transition. As their adult children reassume their independence, grandparents, feeling distanced from their grandchildren, may seek custodial rights in order to maintain the relationship that they have established with their grandchildren.

According to Johnson (1988), the nucleated reorganization most frequently occurred among women without economic problems and with amicable, though distant, relationships with their families. Independence is stressed by both grandparents and parents in the nucleated style and expectations between the generations tend to be low. Neutral relationships with little warmth or animosity expressed tend to characterize the nucleated reorganizational style. Conflict occurs if the grandparents expect more interaction with their grandchildren than is desired by the nuclear family who prefer privacy and independence. Such a conflict of expectations may lead grandparents to seek custodial rights.

Finally, the third style reported by Johnson (1988), the social network, involves the development of an informal social system. Relationships are voluntary and based on the desire for interpersonal interaction rather than family obligation. Both parents and grandparents continue to interact with the former child-in-law and the other set of

grandparents and if remarriage occurs, the new in-laws are welcomed into the network.

Step-grandparents. Increasing divorce rates and the subsequent remarriage of divorced spouses has resulted in an increase in the number of step-grandparents. Step-grandparenthood can occur either as the result of a parent or a grandparent remarrying. Such reunions require both grandparents and their step-grandchildren to negotiate new relationships.

Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) identified two factors that are crucial in the development of step-grandparent and step-grandchild relationships. First, the age of the child at the time of the marriage plays an important role. As discussed earlier, the age of grandchildren can impact the relationship between grandchildren and their grandparents. The second factor involved in the negotiation of relationships between step-grandparents and step-grandchildren is whether or not the step-grandchild lives with the child of the step-grandparent.

The fact that step-grandchildren view their relationship with their step-grandparents as important was supported by the findings of Trygstad and Sanders (1989). In their study, 48 percent of young adults indicated that their relationship with their step-grandparents was important to them and 63 percent of young adults wanted more

interaction with their step-grandparents. Furthermore, step-grandchildren who live close to their step-grandparents, were satisfied with their parent's remarriage and who had acquired their step-grandparents at an early age had closer relationships with their step-grandparents than did step-grandchildren who lived a distance away, were dissatisfied with their parent's remarriage and were older when they acquired their step-grandparents.

According to Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986), step-grandchildren are less likely to refer to their grandparents using kinship terms than are grandchildren. The authors suggest that this may be associated with the significance of the grandparental role in the family.

Legal issues and visitation rights. Renegotiation of the grandparent-grandchild relationship following divorce may become conflictual. According to Gladstone (1987), two factors are associated with decreases in visitation between grandparents and grandchildren following divorce. The first factor is problems in redefining the relationship and the second is unresolved conflicts in the family. Contact may be lessened if efforts are not made to communicate new expectations.

Intergenerational conflicts have recently become the focus of the legal system. Currently grandparents in all

fifty states have the legal right to petition for visitation with their grandchildren (Thompson, Scalora, Castrianno & Limber, 1991). In addition, six states also allow great-grandparents to petition for rights to visitation. Visitation laws vary from state to state, although attempts have been made to pass a uniform visitation law.

Gibson (1984) suggests that three interacting phenomena are responsible for the increase in grandparental rights. First, he points to the increased responsibility assumed by many grandparents who may become temporary caregivers for their grandchildren in times of family crisis. Second, he notes the that grandparents today are often younger and healthier than grandparents of past generations and more assertive in regard to their rights. Finally, the literature on grandparenting, specifically the increase in information on the benefits of the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren, is identified by Gibson as a factor responsible for the increase in visitation rights for grandparents.

A central point of visitation laws is the concept that it is in the best interests of the child to develop and maintain a relationship with their grandparents. Thompson et al. (1991) point out the difficulties inherent in determining a child's best interests. There are some that argue that it is damaging to the child to sever the

relationship between grandchild and grandparent because of conflict between the parents and the grandparents. Others hold that children suffer when placed in the center of intergenerational conflict.

While decisions regarding visitation rights have typically focused on the best interests of the child, it is clear that in a number of cases the best interests of the grandparents also come into play. Undoubtedly, it is to the benefit of all generations to develop strong kinship networks. At the same time, it does seem difficult to foster such close relationships through court-ordered contact.

Directions for Future Research

Future research on the topic of grandparenting can take a number of different directions. There are topics which have not been adequately explored, as well as areas which have been neglected altogether.

Longitudinal research regarding the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren would seem to be a rich source of information. However, such investigations are scarce for a number of reasons, including the fact that such studies tend to be expensive and time-consuming.

Cross-sectional research on grandparenting may be useful in addressing a number of questions that have been posed. However, such research also presents a number of

problems in regard to use of comparable methods and data.

As already noted, there is a clear need for more cross-cultural research in the area of grandparenting. The impact of cultural and ethnic variation on the grandparent-grandchild relationship has only recently come under investigation. Other demographic variables, including socioeconomic status, also need to be explored.

A number of important questions regarding relationships between grandparents and their grandchildren have not been fully examined. Very few investigations have considered the role of paternal grandparents. The impact of ordinal position of the grandchildren, first-born versus later-born, and the effect of several grandchildren on the grandparent-grandchild relationship has not been fully addressed. The majority of studies on grandparenting have focused on grandmothers, with relatively little known in regard to the feelings and perceptions of grandfathers toward their roles and their interactions with their grandchildren.

Currently, very few studies have researched the relationship between the mental health of the grandparent and the quality of the grandparenting. Furthermore, variables such as gender and age both of the grandparent and the grandchild which may impact upon the mental health of the grandparent need to be studied.

It is clear that more research is needed in the area of grandparenthood in order to further add to our knowledge regarding this important stage in life. Studies that address the issues and questions raised here will provide insight into a number of dimensions important to our understanding of the relationship between grandparent and grandchild.

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